

**FOOD STAMP ACT OF 1977**  
**(Title XIII of Public Law 95-113)**  
**September 29, 1977**

**SHORT TITLE**

**Sec. 1.** This Act may be cited as the Food Stamp Act of 1977.

**DECLARATION OF POLICY**

**Sec. 2.** It is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress, in order to promote the general welfare, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's population by raising levels of nutrition among low-income households. Congress hereby finds that the limited food purchasing power of low-income households contributes to hunger and malnutrition among members of such households. Congress further finds that increased utilization of food in establishing and maintaining adequate national levels of nutrition will promote the distribution in a beneficial manner of the Nation's agricultural abundance and will strengthen the Nation's agricultural economy, as well as result in more orderly marketing and distribution of foods. To alleviate such hunger and malnutrition, a food stamp program is herein authorized which will permit low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet through normal channels of trade by increasing food purchasing power for all eligible households who apply for participation. (7 U.S.C. 2011)

**DEFINITIONS**

**Sec. 3.** As used in this Act, the term:

(a) "Allotment" means the total value of coupons a household is authorized to receive during each month.

(b) "Authorization card" means the document issued by the State agency to an eligible household which shows the allotment the household is entitled to be issued.

(c) "Certification period" means the period for which households shall be eligible to receive authorization cards. In the case of a household all of whose members are included in a federally aided public assistance or general assistance grant, the period shall coincide with the period of such grant. In the case of all other households the period shall be not less than three months: Provided, That such period may be up to twelve months for any household consisting entirely of unemployable or elderly or primarily self-employed persons, or as short as circumstances require for those households as to which there is a substantial likelihood of frequent changes in income or household status, and for any household on initial certification, as determined by the Secretary.

(d) "Coupon" means any coupon, stamp, or type of certificate issued pursuant to the provisions of this Act.

(e) “Coupon issuer” means any office of the State agency or any person, partnership, corporation, organization, political subdivision, or other entity with which a State agency has contracted for, or to which it has delegated functional responsibility in connection with, the issuance of coupons to households.

(f) “Drug addiction or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation program” means any such program conducted by a private nonprofit organization or institution which is certified by the State agency or agencies designated by the Governor as responsible for the administration of the State’s programs for alcoholics and drug addicts pursuant to Public Law 91-616 (Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation Act of 1970) and Public Law 92-255 (Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972) as providing treatment that can lead to the rehabilitation of drug addicts or alcoholics.

(g) “Food” means (1) any food or food product for home consumption except alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and hot foods or hot food products ready for immediate consumption other than those authorized pursuant to clauses (3), (4), and (5) of this subsection, (2) seeds and plants for use in gardens to produce food for the personal consumption of the eligible household, (3) in the case of those persons who are sixty years of age or over or who receive supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, and their spouses, meals prepared by and served in senior citizens’ centers, apartment buildings occupied primarily by such persons, public or private nonprofit establishments (eating or otherwise) that feed such persons, private establishments that contract with the appropriate agency of the State to offer meals for such persons at concessional prices, and meals prepared for and served to residents of federally subsidized housing for the elderly, (4) in the case of persons sixty years of age or over and persons who are physically or mentally handicapped or otherwise so disabled that they are unable adequately to prepare all of their meals, meals prepared for and delivered to them (and their spouses) at their home by a public or private nonprofit organization or by a private establishment that contracts with the appropriate State agency to perform such services at concessional prices, (5) in the case of narcotics addicts or alcoholics served by drug addiction or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation programs, meals prepared and served under such programs, and (6) in the case of certain eligible households living in Alaska, equipment for procuring food by hunting and fishing, such as nets, hooks, rods, harpoons, and knives (but not equipment for purposes of transportation, clothing, or shelter, and not firearms, ammunition, and explosives) if the Secretary determines that such households are located in an area of the State where it is extremely difficult to reach stores selling food and that such households depend to a substantial extent upon hunting and fishing for subsistence.

(h) “Food stamp program” means the program operated pursuant to the provisions of this Act.

(i) “Household” means (1) an individual who lives alone or who, while living with others, customarily purchases food and prepares meals for home consumption separate

and apart from the others, or else pays compensation to the others for such meals, or (2) a group of individuals who live together and customarily purchase food and prepare meals together for home consumption or else live with others and pay compensation to the others for such meals. In neither event shall any individual or group of individuals constitute a household if they reside in an institution or boarding house. For the purposes of this subsection, residents of federally subsidized housing for the elderly and narcotics addicts or alcoholics who live under the supervision of a private nonprofit institution for the purpose of regular participation in a drug or alcoholic treatment program shall not be considered residents of institutions.

(j) “Reservation” means the geographically defined area or areas over which a tribal organization (as that term is defined in section 3(p) of this Act) exercises governmental jurisdiction.

(k) “Retail food store” means (1) an establishment or recognized department thereof or house-to-house trade route, over 50 per centum of whose food sales volume consists of staple food items for home preparation and consumption, such as meat, poultry, fish, bread, cereals, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and the like, but not including accessory food items, such as coffee, tea, cocoa, carbonated and uncarbonated drinks, candy, condiments, and spices, (2) an establishment, organization, or program referred to in subsections (g)(3), (4), and (5) of this section, (3) a store purveying the hunting and fishing equipment described in subsection (g)(6) of this section, and (4) any private nonprofit cooperative food purchasing venture, including those in which the members pay for food purchased prior to the receipt of such food.

(l) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(m) “State” means the fifty States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the reservations of an Indian tribe whose tribal organization meets the requirements of this Act for participation as a State agency.

(n) “State agency” means (1) the agency of State government, including the local offices thereof, which has the responsibility for the administration of the federally aided public assistance programs within such State, and in those States where such assistance programs are operated on a decentralized basis, the term shall include the counterpart local agencies administering such programs, and (2) the tribal organization of an Indian tribe determined by the Secretary to be capable of effectively administering a food distribution program under section 4(b) of this Act or a food stamp program under section 11(d) of this Act.

(o) “Thrifty food plan” means the diet required to feed a family of four persons consisting of a man and a woman twenty through fifty-four, a child six through eight, and a child nine through eleven years of age, determined in accordance with the Secretary’s calculations. The cost of such diet shall be the basis for uniform allotments for all households regardless of their actual composition, except that the Secretary shall (1) make household-size adjustments taking into account economies of scale, (2) make cost

adjustments in the thrifty food plan for Alaska and Hawaii to reflect the cost of food in those States, (3) make cost adjustments in the separate thrifty food plans for Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States to reflect the cost of food in those States, but not to exceed the cost of food in the fifty States and the District of Columbia, and (4) adjust the cost of such diet every January 1 and July 1 to the nearest dollar increment to reflect changes in the cost of the thrifty food plan for the six months ending the preceding September 30 and March 31, respectively.

(p) "Tribal organization" means the recognized governing body of an Indian tribe (including the tribally recognized intertribal organization of such tribes), as the term 'Indian tribe' is defined in the Indian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 450b (b)), as well as any Indian tribe, band, or community holding a treaty with a State government. (7 U.S.C. 2012)

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM**

**Sec. 4.** (a) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated under section 18 of this Act, the Secretary is authorized to formulate and administer a food stamp program under which, at the request of the State agency, eligible households within the State shall be provided an opportunity to obtain a more nutritious diet through the issuance to them of an allotment. The coupons so received by such households shall be used only to purchase food from retail food stores which have been approved for participation in the food stamp program. Coupons issued and used as provided in this Act shall be redeemable at face value by the Secretary through the facilities of the Treasury of the United States.

(b) In jurisdictions where the food stamp program is in operation, there shall be no distribution of federally donated foods to households under the authority of any law, except that distribution may be made (1) on a temporary basis under programs authorized by law to meet disaster relief needs, or (2) for the purpose of the commodity supplemental food program. Distribution of commodities, with or without the food stamp program, shall also be made whenever a request for concurrent or separate food program operations, respectively, is made by a tribal organization. In the event of distribution on all or part of an Indian reservation, the appropriate agency of the State government in the area involved shall be responsible for such distribution, except that, if the Secretary determines that the tribal organization is capable of effectively and efficiently administering such distribution, then such tribal organization shall administer such distribution: Provided, That the Secretary shall not approve any plan for such distribution which permits any household on any Indian reservation to participate simultaneously in the food stamp program and the distribution of federally donated foods. The Secretary is authorized to pay such amounts for administrative costs of such distribution on Indian reservations as the Secretary finds necessary for effective administration of such distribution by a State agency or tribal organization.

(c) The Secretary shall issue such regulations consistent with this Act as the Secretary deems necessary or appropriate for the effective and efficient administration of the food

stamp program and shall promulgate all such regulations in accordance with the procedures set forth in section 553 of title 5 of the United States Code. In addition, prior to issuing any regulation, the Secretary shall provide the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate a copy of the regulation with a detailed statement justifying it. (7 U.S.C. 2013)

## **ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS**

**Sec. 5.** (a) Participation in the food stamp program shall be limited to those households whose incomes and other financial resources, held singly or in joint ownership, are determined to be a substantial limiting factor in permitting them to obtain a more nutritious diet. Assistance under this program shall be furnished to all eligible households who make application for such participation.

(b) The Secretary shall establish uniform national standards of eligibility (other than the income standards for Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States established in accordance with subsections (c) and (e) of this section) for participation by households in the food stamp program in accordance with the provisions of this section. No plan of operation submitted by a State agency shall be approved unless the standards of eligibility meet those established by the Secretary, and no State agency shall impose any other standards of eligibility as a condition for participating in the program.

(c) The income standards of eligibility shall be the nonfarm income poverty guidelines prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget adjusted annually pursuant to section 625 of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2971d), for the forty-eight States and the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and Guam, respectively: Provided, That in no event shall the standards of eligibility for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, or Guam exceed those in the forty-eight contiguous States: Provided further, That the income poverty guidelines for the period commencing July 1, 1978, shall be made as up to date as possible by multiplying the income poverty guidelines for 1977 by the change between the average 1977 Consumer Price Index and the Consumer Price index for March 1978, utilizing the most current procedures which have been used by the Office of Management and Budget, and the income poverty guidelines for future periods shall be similarly adjusted.

(d) Household income for purposes of the food stamp program shall include all income from whatever source excluding only (1) any gain or benefit which is not in the form of money payable directly to a household, (2) any income in the certification period which is received too infrequently or irregularly to be reasonably anticipated, but not in excess of \$30 in a quarter, (3) all educational loans on which payment is deferred, grants, scholarships, fellowships, veterans' educational benefits, and the like to the extent that they are used for tuition and mandatory school fees at an institution of higher education or

school for the handicapped, (4) all loans other than educational loans on which repayment is deferred, (5) reimbursements which do not exceed expenses actually incurred and which do not represent a gain or benefit to the household, (6) moneys received and used for the care and maintenance of a third-party beneficiary who is not a household member, (7) income earned by a child who is a member of the household, who is a student, and who has not attained his eighteenth birthday, (8) moneys received in the form of nonrecurring lump-sum payments, including, but not limited to, income tax refunds, rebates, or credits, retroactive lump-sum social security or railroad retirement pension payments and retroactive lump-sum insurance settlements: Provided, That such payments shall be counted as resources, unless specifically excluded by other laws, (9) the cost of producing self-employed income, and (10) any income that any other law specifically excludes from consideration as income for the purpose of determining eligibility for the food stamp program.

(e) In computing household income, the Secretary shall allow a standard deduction of \$60 a month for each household, except that households in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States shall be allowed a standard deduction determined by the Secretary in accordance with the best available information on the relationship of actual or potential itemized deductions claimed under the food stamp program in those areas to such deductions in the forty-eight contiguous State and the District of Columbia. Such standard deductions, starting July 1, 1978, shall be adjusted every July 1 and January 1 to the nearest \$5 to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics for items other than food for the six months ending the preceding March 31 and September 30, respectively. All households with earned income shall be allowed an additional deduction of 20 per centum of all earned income (other than that excluded by subsection (d) of this section), to compensate for taxes, other mandatory deductions from salary, and work expenses. Households shall also be entitled to (1) a dependent care deduction, the maximum allowable level of which shall be the same as that for the excess shelter expense deduction contained in clause (2) of this subsection, for the actual cost of payments necessary for the care of a dependent, regardless of the dependent's age, when such care enables a household member to accept or continue employment, or training or education which is preparatory for employment, or (2) an excess shelter expense deduction to the extent that the monthly amount expended by a household for shelter exceeds an amount equal to 50 per centum of monthly household income after all other applicable deductions have been allowed: Provided, That the amount of such excess shelter expense deduction shall not exceed \$75 a month in the forty-eight contiguous States and the District of Columbia, and shall not exceed, in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States, amounts determined by the Secretary in accordance with the best available information on the relationship of the actual shelter costs in those areas to such costs in the forty-eight contiguous States and the District of Columbia, adjusted annually (commencing July 1, 1978) to the nearest \$5 increment to reflect changes in the shelter, fuel, and utilities components of housing costs in the Consumer Price Index published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor for the twelve-month period ending the preceding March 31, or (3) a deduction combining the dependent care and excess shelter

expense deductions under clauses (1) and (2) of this subsection, the maximum allowable level of which shall not exceed the maximum allowable deduction under clause (2) of this subsection.

(f) Household income shall be calculated by the State agency for the purpose of determining household eligibility. The State agency in calculating household income shall take into account the income reasonably anticipated to be received by the household in the certification period for which eligibility is being determined and the income which has been received by the household during the thirty days preceding the filing of its application for food stamps so that the State agency may reasonably ascertain the income that is and will be actually available to the household for the certification period, except that for (1) those households which by contract for other than an hourly or piecework basis, or by self-employment, derive their annual income in a period of time shorter than one year, income shall be calculated by being averaged over a twelve-month period and (2) those households which receive nonexcluded income of the type specified in subsection (d)(3) of this section, income shall be calculated by being averaged over the period for which it is provided.

(g) The Secretary shall prescribe the types and allowable amount of financial resources (liquid and non liquid assets) an eligible household may own, and shall, in so doing, assure that a household otherwise eligible to participate in the food stamp program will not be eligible to participate if its resources exceed \$1,750, or, in the case of a household consisting of two or more persons, one of whom is age 60 or over, if its resources exceed \$3,000. The Secretary shall, in prescribing inclusions in, and exclusions from, financial resources, follow the regulations in force as of June 1, 1977, and shall, in addition, (1) include in financial resources any boats, snowmobiles, and airplanes used for recreational purposes, any vacation homes, any mobile homes used primarily for vacation purposes, and any licensed vehicle (other than one used to produce earned income) used for household transportation or used to obtain or continue employment or to transport disabled household members to the extent that the fair market value of any such vehicle exceeds \$4,500, and (2) study and develop means of improving the effectiveness of these resource requirements in limiting participation to households in need of food assistance, and implement and report the results of such study and the Secretary's plans to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate no later than June 1, 1978.

(h)(1) The Secretary shall, after consultation with the official empowered to exercise the authority provided for by section 302(a) of the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, establish temporary emergency standards of eligibility for the duration of the emergency for households who are victims of a disaster which disrupts commercial channels of food distribution, if such households are in need of temporary food assistance and if commercial channels of food distribution have again become available to meet the temporary food needs of such households. Such standards as are prescribed for individual emergencies may be promulgated without regard to section 4(c) of this Act or the procedures set forth in section 553 of title 5 of the United States code.

(2) The Secretary shall establish a Food Stamp Disaster Task Force, to assist States in implementing and operating the disaster program, which shall be available to go into a disaster area and provide direct assistance to State and local officials. (7 U.S.C. 2014)

### **ELIGIBILITY DISQUALIFICATIONS**

**Sec. 6.** (a) In addition to meeting the standards of eligibility prescribed in section 5 of this Act, households and individuals who are members of eligible households must also meet and comply with the specific requirements of this section to be eligible for participation in the food stamp program.

(b) No individual who is a member of a household otherwise eligible to participate in the food stamp program shall be eligible to participate for (1) three months after such individual has been found by a State agency after notice and hearing at the State level, or after failure to appeal a local hearing to the State level, to have fraudulently used, presented, transferred, acquired, received, possessed, or altered coupons or authorization cards, or (2) a period of not less than six and not more than twenty-four months, as determined by the court, after such individual has been found by a court of appropriate jurisdiction, with a State or a political subdivision thereof or the United States as prosecutor or plaintiff, to have been criminally or civilly fraudulent in the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt, possession, or alteration of coupons or authorization cards, or (3) both of the periods specified in clauses (1) and (2) of this subsection. Each such period of ineligibility is to take effect immediately upon the relevant administrative or judicial finding and to remain in effect, without possibility of administrative stay, unless and until the finding of fraud is subsequently reversed by a court of appropriate jurisdiction, but in no event shall the period of disqualification be subject to judicial review.

(c) No household shall be eligible to participate in the food stamp program if it refuses to cooperate in providing information to the State agency that is necessary for making a determination of its eligibility or for completing any subsequent review of its eligibility. Every household that is participating in the food stamp program shall report or cause to be reported to the State agency, on a form designed or approved by the Secretary (that shall contain a description in understandable terms in prominent and boldface lettering of the appropriate civil and criminal provisions dealing with violations of this Act, including the penalties therefor, by members of an eligible household) changes in income or household circumstances which the Secretary deems necessary in order to assure accurate eligibility and benefit determinations. The reporting requirement prescribed by this subsection shall be the sole such requirement for reporting changes in income or in household circumstances for participating households.

(d)(1) Unless otherwise exempted by the provisions of paragraph (d)(2) of this subsection, no household shall be eligible for assistance under this Act if it includes a physically and mentally fit person between the ages of eighteen and sixty who (i) refuses at the time of application and once every six months thereafter to register for employment in



a manner determined by the Secretary; (ii) refuses to fulfill whatever reasonable reporting and inquiry about employment requirements as are prescribed by the Secretary; (iii) is head of the household and voluntarily quits any job without good cause, unless the household was certified for benefits under this Act immediately prior to such unemployment:

Provided, That the period of ineligibility shall be sixty days from the time of the voluntary quit; or (iv) refuses without good cause to accept an offer of employment at a wage not less than the higher of either the applicable State or Federal minimum wage, or 80 per centum of the wage that would have governed had the minimum hourly rate under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)), been applicable to the offer of employment, and at a site or plant not then subject to a strike or lockout.

(2) A person who otherwise would be required to comply with the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subsection shall be exempt from such requirements if he or she is (A) currently subject to and complying with a work registration requirement under title IV of the Social Security Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 602), or the Federal-State unemployment compensation system; (B) a parent or other member of a household with responsibility for the care of a dependent child under age twelve or of an incapacitated person; (C) a parent or other caretaker of a child in a household where there is another able-bodied parent who is subject to the requirements of this subsection; (D) a bona fide student enrolled at least half time in any recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education (except that any such person shall be subject to the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subsection during any period of more than thirty days when such school or program is in vacation or recess and any such person enrolled in an institution of higher education shall be subject to the requirements of subsection (e)(3)(B) of this section as well); (E) a regular participant in a drug addiction or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation program; or (F) employed a minimum of thirty hours per week or receiving weekly earnings which equal the minimum hourly rate under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)), multiplied by thirty hours.

(3) To the extent that a State employment service is assigned responsibility for administering the provisions of subsection (d) of this section, it shall comply with regulations issued jointly by the Secretary and the Secretary of Labor, which regulations shall be patterned to the maximum extent practicable on the work incentive program requirements set forth in title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 630 et seq.) and shall take into account the diversity of the needs of the food stamp work registration population.

(e) No individual who is a member of a household otherwise eligible to participate in the food stamp program under this section shall be eligible to participate in the food stamp program as a member of that or any other household if he or she (1) has reached his or her eighteenth birthday, (2) is enrolled at least half time in an institution of higher education, and (3)(A) is properly claimed or could properly be claimed as a dependent child for Federal income tax purposes by a taxpayer who is not a member of an eligible household or (B) during the regular school year (i) is not employed a minimum of twenty hours per week or is not participating in a federally financed work study program, (ii) does not have weekly earnings which at least equal the minimum hourly rate under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended (29U.S.C. 206(a)(1)), multiplied by twenty hours, (iii)

is not registered for work amounting to at least twenty hours per week, (iv) is not the head of a household containing one or more other persons who are dependents of that individual because he or she supplies more than half of their support, or (v) is not covered by an exemption from the work registration requirement contained in subsection (d) of this section other than clause (D) of paragraph (2) of that subsection.

(f) No individual who is a member of a household otherwise eligible to participate in the food stamp program under this section shall be eligible to participate in the food stamp program as a member of that or any other household unless he or she is (1) a resident of the United States and (2) either (A) a citizen or (B) an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence as an immigrant as defined by sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(20) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15) and 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(20), excluding, among others, alien visitors, tourists, diplomats, and students who enter the United States temporarily with no intention of abandoning their residence in a foreign county; or (C) an alien who entered the United States prior to June 30, 1948, or such subsequent date as is enacted by law, has continuously maintained his or her residence in the United States since then, and is not ineligible for citizenship, but who is deemed to be lawfully admitted for permanent residence as a result of an exercise of discretion by the Attorney General pursuant to section 249 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1259); or (D) an alien who has qualified for conditional entry pursuant to section 203(a)(7) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(a)(7)) because of persecution or fear of persecution on account of race, religion, or political opinion or because of being uprooted by catastrophic natural calamity; or (E) an alien who is lawfully present in the United States as a result of an exercise of discretion by the Attorney General for emergent reasons or reasons deemed strictly in the public interest pursuant to section 212(d)(5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(d)(5)); or (F) an alien within the United States as to whom the Attorney General has withheld deportation pursuant to section 243 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1253(h)) because of the judgment of the Attorney General that the alien would otherwise be subject to persecution on account of race, religion, or political opinion. No aliens other than the ones specifically described in clauses (B) through (F) of this subsection shall be eligible to participate in the food stamp program as a member of any household.

(g) No individual who receives supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, State supplementary payments described in section 1616 of such Act, or payments of the type referred to in section 212(a) of Public Law 93-66, as amended, shall be considered to be a member of a household for any month, if, for such month, such individual resides in a State which provides State supplementary payments (1) of the type described in section 1616(a) of the Social Security Act and section 212(a) of Public Law 93-66, and (2) the level of which has been found by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare to have been specifically increased so as to include the bonus value of food stamps.

(h) No household that knowingly transfers assets for the purpose of qualifying or attempting to qualify for the food stamp program shall be eligible to participate in the

program for a period of up to one year from the date of discovery of the transfer. (7 U.S.C. 2015)

## ISSUANCE AND USE OF COUPONS

**Sec. 7.** (a) Coupons shall be printed under such arrangements and in such denominations as may be determined by the Secretary to be necessary, and shall be issued only to households which have been duly certified as eligible to participate in the food stamp program.

(b) Coupons issued to eligible households shall be used by them only to purchase food in retail food stores which have been approved for participation in the food stamp program at prices prevailing in such stores: Provided, That nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorizing the Secretary to specify the prices at which food may be sold by wholesale food concerns or retail food stores: Provided further, That eligible households using coupons to purchase food may receive cash in changed therefor so long as the cash received does not equal or exceed the value of the lowest coupon denomination issued.

(c) Coupons issued to eligible households shall be simple in design and shall include only such words or illustrations as are required to explain their purpose and define their denomination. The name of any public official shall not appear on such coupons.

(d) The Secretary shall develop an appropriate procedure for determining and monitoring the level of coupon inventories in the hands of coupon issuers for the purpose of providing that such inventories are at proper levels (taking into consideration the historical and projected volume of coupon distribution by such issuers). Such procedures shall provide that coupon inventories in the hands of such issuers are not in excess of the reasonable needs of such issuers taking into consideration the ease with which such coupon inventories may be resupplied. The Secretary shall require each coupon issuer at intervals prescribed by the Secretary, but not less often than monthly, to send to the Secretary or the Secretary's designee, which may include the State agency, a written report of the issuer's operations during such period. In addition to other information deemed by the Secretary to be appropriate, the Secretary shall require that the report contain an oath, or affirmation, signed by the coupon issuer, or in the case of a corporation or other entity not a natural person, by an appropriate official of the coupon issuer, certifying that the information contained in the report is true and correct to the best of such person's knowledge and belief.

(e) The Secretary shall prescribe appropriate procedures for the delivery of coupons to coupon issuers and for the subsequent controls to be placed over such coupons by coupon issuers in order to ensure adequate accountability.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the State agency shall be responsible to the Secretary for any financial losses involved in the acceptance, storage, and issuance of coupons. (7 U.S.C. 2016)

## **VALUE OF ALLOTMENT**

**Sec. 8.** (a) The value of the allotment which State agencies shall be authorized to issue to any households certified as eligible to participate in the food stamp program shall be equal to the cost to such households of the thrifty food plan reduced by an amount equal to 30 per centum of the household's income, as determined in accordance with section 5 of this Act, rounded to the nearest whole dollar: Provided, That for households of one and two persons the minimum allotment shall be \$10 per month. The Secretary shall, six months after the implementation of the elimination of the charge for allotments and annually thereafter, report to Congress the effect on participation and cost of this elimination.

(b) The value of the allotment provided any eligible household shall not be considered income or resources for any purpose under any Federal, State, or local laws, including, but not limited to, laws relating to taxation, welfare, and public assistance programs, and no participating State or political subdivision thereof shall decrease any assistance otherwise provided an individual or individuals because of the receipt of an allotment under this Act. (7 U.S.C. 2017)

## **APPROVAL OF RETAIL FOOD STORES AND WHOLESALE FOOD CONCERNS**

**Sec. 9.** (a) Regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall provide for the submission of applications for approval by retail food stores and wholesale food concerns which desire to be authorized to accept and redeem coupons under the food stamp program and for the approval of those applicants whose participation will effectuate the purposes of the food stamp program. In determining the qualifications of applicants, there shall be considered among such other factors as may be appropriate, the following: (1) the nature and extent of the food business conducted by the applicant; (2) the volume of coupon business which may reasonably be expected to be conducted by the applicant food store or wholesale food concern; and (3) the business integrity and reputation of the applicant. Approval of an applicant shall be evidenced by the issuance to such applicant of a nontransferable certificate of approval.

(b) No wholesale food concern may be authorized to accept and redeem coupons unless the Secretary determines that its participation is required for the effective and efficient operation of the food stamp program. In addition, no firm may be authorized to accept and redeem coupons as both a retail food store and as a wholesale food concern at the same time.

(c) Regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall require an applicant retail food store or wholesale food concern to submit information which will permit a determination to be made as to whether such applicant qualifies, or continues to qualify, for approval under the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act. Regulations

issued pursuant to this Act shall provide for safeguards which limit the use or disclosure of information obtained under the authority granted by this subsection to purposes directly connected with administration and enforcement of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act.

(d) Any retail food store or wholesale food concern which has failed upon application to receive approval to participate in the food stamp program may obtain a hearing on such refusal as provided in section 14 of this Act. (7 U.S.C. 2018)

## **REDEMPTION OF COUPONS**

**Sec. 10.** Regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall provide for the redemption of coupons accepted by retail food stores through approved wholesale food concerns or through banks, with the cooperation of the Treasury Department, except that retail food stores defined in section 3(k)(4) of this Act shall be authorized to redeem their members' food coupons prior to receipt by the members of the food so purchased and private nonprofit organizations or institutions which serve meals to narcotics addicts or alcoholics in drug addiction or alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation programs shall not be authorized to redeem coupons through banks. (7 U.S.C. 2019)

## **ADMINISTRATION**

**Sec. 11.** (a) The State agency of each participating State shall assume responsibility for the certification of applicant households and for the issuance of coupons and the control and accountability thereof. There shall be kept such records as may be necessary to ascertain whether the program is being conducted in compliance with the provisions of this Act and the regulations issued pursuant to this Act. Such records shall be available for inspection and audit at any reasonable time and shall be preserved for such period of time, not less than three years, as may be specified in the regulations issued pursuant to this Act.

(b) Certification of a household as eligible in any political subdivision shall, in the event of removal of such household to another political subdivision in which the food stamp program is operating, remain valid for participation in the food stamp program for a period of sixty days from the date of such removal.

(c) In the certification of applicant households for the food stamp program, there shall be no discrimination by reason of race, sex, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs.

(d) The State agency (as defined in section 3(n)(1) of this Act) of each State desiring to participate in the food stamp program shall submit for approval a plan of operation specifying the manner in which such program will be conducted within the State in every political subdivision. In the case of all or part of an Indian reservation, the State agency as defined in section 3(n)(1) of this Act shall be responsible for conducting such program on such reservation unless the Secretary determines that the State agency (as defined in

section 3(n)(1) of this Act) if failing, subsequent to the enactment of this Act, properly to administer such program on such reservation in accordance with the purposes of this Act and further determines that the State agency as defined in section 3(n)(2) of this Act is capable of effectively and efficiently conducting such program, in light of the distance of the reservation from State agency-operated certification and issuance centers, the previous experience of such tribal organization in the operation of programs authorized under the Indian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 450) and similar Acts of Congress, the tribal organization's management and fiscal capabilities, and the adequacy of measures taken by the tribal organization to ensure that there shall be no discrimination in the operation of the program on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin, in which event such State agency shall be responsible for conducting such program and submitting for approval a plan of operation specifying the manner in which such program will be conducted. The Secretary, upon the request of a tribal organization, shall provide the designees of such organization with appropriate training and technical assistance to enable them to qualify as expeditiously as possible as a State agency pursuant to section 3(n)(2) of this Act. A State agency, as defined in section 3(n)(1) of this Act, before it submits its plan of operation to the Secretary for the administration of the food stamp program on all or part of an Indian reservation, shall consult in good faith with the tribal organization about that portion of the State's plan of operation pertaining to the implementation of the program for members of the tribe, and shall implement the program in a manner that is responsive to the needs of the Indians on the reservation as determined by ongoing consultation with the tribal organization.

(e) The State plan of operation required under subsection (d) of this section shall provide, among such other provisions as may be required by regulation—

(1) that the State agency shall (A) inform low-income households about the availability, eligibility requirements, and benefits of the food stamp program, including, but not limited to, notification to recipients of aid to families with dependent children, supplemental security income, and unemployment compensation, distribution of application forms, and associated instructions in filling out such forms, and on the documentation required pursuant to paragraph (3) of this subsection; (B) not conduct any other outreach activities of a noninformational nature in those areas in which a federally funded community action program is in operation and conducting food stamp outreach; and (C) use appropriate bilingual personnel and printed material in the administration of the program in those portions of political subdivisions in the State in which a substantial number of members of low-income households speak a language other than English;

(2) that each household which contacts a food stamp office in person during office hours to make what may reasonably be interpreted as an oral or written request for food stamp assistance shall receive and shall be permitted to file, on the same day that such contact is first made, a simplified, uniform national application form for participation in the food stamp program designed by the Secretary, unless the Secretary approves a deviation from that form by a particular State agency because of the use by that agency of a dual public assistance food stamp application form pursuant to subsection (i) of this section, the requirements of an agency's computer system, or other exigencies as determined by the Secretary. Each application form shall contain a description in understandable terms in

prominent and boldface lettering of the appropriate civil and criminal provisions dealing with violations of this Act, including the penalties therefor, by members of an eligible household. The State agency shall comply with the standards established by the Secretary for points and hours of certification, and for telephone contact by, mail delivery of forms to and mail return of forms by, and subsequent home or telephone interview with, the elderly, physically or mentally handicapped, and persons otherwise unable, solely because of transportation difficulties and similar hardships, to appear in person at a certification office or through a representative pursuant to paragraph (7) of this subsection, so that such persons may have an adequate opportunity to be certified properly;

(3) that the State agency shall thereafter promptly determine the eligibility of each applicant household by way of verification only of income other than that determined to be excluded by section 5(d) of this Act and such other eligibility factors as the Secretary determines to be necessary to implement sections 5 and 6 of this Act, so as to complete certification of and provide an allotment retroactive to the period of application to any eligible household not later than thirty days following its filing of an application;

(4) that the State agency shall insure that each participating household receive a notice of expiration of its certification immediately prior to or at the start of the last month of its certification period advising it that it must submit a new application in order to renew its eligibility for a new certification period and, further, that each such household which seeks to be certified another time or more times thereafter by filing an application for such recertification no later than fifteen days prior to the day upon which its existing certification period expires shall, if found to be still eligible, receive its allotment no later than one month after the receipt of the last allotment issued to it pursuant to its prior certification, but if such household is found to be ineligible or to be eligible for a smaller allotment during the new certification period it shall not continue to participate and receive benefits on the basis authorized for the preceding certification period even if it makes a timely request for a fair hearing pursuant to paragraph (10) of this subsection;

(5) the specific standards to be used in determining the eligibility of applicant households which shall be in accordance with sections 5 and 6 of this Act and shall include no additional requirements imposed by the State agency;

(6) that (A) the State agency shall undertake the certification of applicant households in accordance with the general procedures prescribed by the Secretary in the regulations issued pursuant to this Act; (B) the State agency personnel utilized in undertaking such certification shall be employed in accordance with the current standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration or any standards later prescribed by the United States Civil Service Commission pursuant to section 208 of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 modifying or superseding such standards relating to the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards on a merit basis; and (C) the State agency shall undertake to provide a continuing, comprehensive program of training for all personnel undertaking such certification;

(7) that any applicant household may be represented in the certification process and that any eligible household may be represented in coupon issuance or food purchase by a person other than a member of the household so long as that person has been clearly designated as the representative of that household for that purpose by the head of the

household or the spouse of the head, and where the certification process is concerned, the representative is an adult who is sufficiently aware of relevant household circumstances;

(8) safeguards which limit the use or disclosure of information obtained from applicant households to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act;

(9) that households in immediate need because of no income as defined in sections 5(d) and (e) of this Act receive coupons on an expedited basis;

(10) for the granting of a fair hearing and a prompt determination thereafter to any household aggrieved by the action of the State agency under any provision of its plan of operation as it affects the participation of such household in the food stamp program or by a claim against the household for an overissuance: Provided, That any household which timely requests such a fair hearing after receiving individual notice of agency action reducing or terminating its benefits within the household's certification period shall continue to participate and receive benefits on the basis authorized immediately prior to the notice of adverse action until such time as the fair hearing is completed and an adverse decision rendered or until such time as the household's certification period terminates, whichever occurs earlier;

(11) for the prompt restoration in the form of coupons to households of any allotment or portion thereof which has been wrongfully denied or terminated;

(12) for the submission of such reports and other information as from time to time may be required by the Secretary;

(13) for compliance with standards set by the Secretary with respect to points and hours of coupon issuance;

(14) for indicators of expected performance in the administration of the program;

(15) that the State agency shall prominently display in all food stamp and public assistance offices posters prepared or obtained by the Secretary describing the information contained in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of this paragraph and shall make available in such offices for home use pamphlets prepared or obtained by the Secretary listing (A) foods that contain substantial amounts of recommended daily allowances of vitamins, minerals, and protein for children and adults; (B) menus that combine such foods into meals; (C) details on eligibility for other programs administered by the Secretary that provide nutrition benefits; and (D) general information on the relationship between health and diet; and

(16) that the State agency shall specify a plan of operation for providing food stamps for households that are victims of a disaster; that such plan shall include, but not be limited to, procedures for informing the public about the disaster program and how to apply for its benefits, coordination with Federal and private disaster relief agencies and local government officials, application procedures to reduce hardship and inconvenience and deter fraud, and instruction of caseworkers in procedures for implementing and operating the disaster program.

(f) To encourage the purchase of nutritious foods, the Secretary shall extend the expanded food and nutrition education program to the greatest extent possible to reach food stamp program participants. The program shall be further supplemented by the development of single concept printed materials, specifically designed for persons with



low reading and comprehension levels, on how to buy and prepare more nutritious and economical meals and on the relationship between food and good health.

(g) If the Secretary determines that in the administration of the food stamp program there is a failure by a State agency to comply with any of the provisions of this Act, the regulations issued pursuant to this Act, or the State plan of operation submitted pursuant to subsection (d) of this section, the Secretary shall immediately inform such State agency of such failure and shall allow the State agency a specified period of time for the correction of such failure. If the State agency does not correct such failure within that specified period, the Secretary may refer the matter to the Attorney General with a request that injunctive relief be sought to require compliance forthwith by the State agency and, upon suit by the Attorney General in an appropriate district court of the United States having jurisdiction of the geographic area in which the State agency is located and a showing that noncompliance has occurred, appropriate injunctive relief shall issue.

(h) If the Secretary determines that there has been negligence or fraud on the part of the State agency in the certification of applicant households, the State shall, upon request of the Secretary, deposit into the Treasury of the United States, a sum equal to the face value of any coupon or coupons issued as a result of such negligence or fraud.

(i) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare shall develop a system by which (1) a single interview shall be conducted to determine eligibility for the food stamp program and the aid to families with dependent children program under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act; (2) households in which all members are recipients of supplemental security income shall be permitted to apply for participation in the food stamp program by executing a simplified affidavit at the social security office and be certified for eligibility utilizing information contained in files of the Social Security Administration; (3) households in which all members are included in a federally aided public assistance or State or local general assistance grant shall have their application for participation in the food stamp program contained in the public assistance or general assistance application form; and (4) new applicants, as well as households which have recently lost or been denied eligibility for public assistance or general assistance, shall be certified for participation in the food stamp program based on information in the public assistance or general assistance case file to the extent that reasonably verified information is available in such case file.

(j) The Secretary, in conjunction with the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, is authorized to prescribe regulations permitting applicants for and recipients of social security benefits to apply for food stamps at social security offices and be certified for food stamp eligibility in such offices in order that the application and certification for food stamp assistance may be accomplished as efficiently and conveniently as possible.

(k) Subject to the approval of the President, post offices in all or part of the State may issue, upon request by the State agency, food stamps to eligible households. (7 U.S.C. 2020)

## **CIVIL MONEY PENALTIES AND DISQUALIFICATION OF RETAIL FOOD STORES AND WHOLESALE FOOD CONCERNS**

**Sec. 12.** Any approved retail food store or wholesale food concern may be disqualified for a specified period of time from further participation in the food stamp program, or subjected to a civil money penalty of up to \$5,000 for each violation if the Secretary determines that its disqualification would cause hardship to food stamp households, on a finding, made as specified in the regulations, that such store or concern has violated any of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act. Such disqualification shall be for such period of time as may be determined in accordance with regulations issued pursuant to this Act. The action of disqualification or the imposition of a civil money penalty shall be subject to review as provided in section 14 of this Act. (7 U.S.C. 2021)

### **DETERMINATION OF DISPOSITION OF CLAIMS**

**Sec. 13.** The Secretary shall have the power to determine the amount of and settle and adjust any claim and to compromise or deny all or part of any such claim or claims arising under the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act, including, but not limited to, claims arising from fraudulent and nonfraudulent overissuances to recipients. Such powers with respect to claims against recipients may be delegated by the Secretary to State agencies. (7 U.S.C. 2022)

### **ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL REVIEW**

**Sec. 14.** Whenever an application of a retail food store or wholesale food concern to participate in the food stamp program is denied pursuant to section 9 of this Act, or a retail food store or wholesale food concern is disqualified or subjected to a civil money penalty under the provisions of section 12 of this Act, or all or part of any claim of a retail food store or wholesale food concern is denied under the provisions of section 13 of this Act, or a claim against a State agency is stated pursuant to the provisions of section 13 of this Act, notice of such administrative action shall be issued to the retail food store, wholesale food concern, or State agency involved. Such notice shall be delivered by certified mail or personal service. If such store, concern, or State agency is aggrieved by such action, it may, in accordance with regulations promulgated under this Act, within ten days of the date of delivery of such notice, file a written request for an opportunity to submit information in support of its position to such person or persons as the regulations may designate. If such a request is not made or if such store, concern, or State agency fails to submit information in support of its position after filing a request, the administrative determination shall be final. If such request is made by such store, concern, or State agency, such information as may be submitted by the store, concern, or State agency, as well as such other information as may be available, shall be reviewed by the person or persons designated by the Secretary, who shall, subject to the right of judicial review hereinafter provided, make a determination which shall be final and which shall take effect thirty days after the date of the delivery or service of such final notice of determination. If the store, concern, or State agency feels aggrieved by such final determination, it may obtain judicial review thereof by filing a complaint against the United States in the United States court for the district in which it resides or is engaged in

business, or, in the case of a retail food store or wholesale food concern, in any court of record of the State having competent jurisdiction, within thirty days after the date of delivery or service of the final notice of determination upon it, requesting the court to set aside such determination. The copy of the summons and complaint required to be delivered to the official or agency whose order is being attacked shall be sent to the Secretary or such person or persons as the Secretary may designate to receive service of process. The suit in the United States district court or State court shall be a trial de novo by the court in which the court shall determine the validity of the questioned administrative action in issue. If the court determines that such administrative action is invalid, it shall enter such judgment or order as it determines is in accordance with the law and the evidence. During the pendency of such judicial review, or an appeal therefrom, the administrative action under review shall be and remain in full force and effect, unless and application to the court on not less than ten days' notice, and after hearing thereon and a showing of irreparable injury, the court temporarily stays such administrative action pending disposition of such trial or appeal. (7 U.S.C. 2023)

## **VIOLATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT**

**Sec. 15.** (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the Secretary may provide for the issuance or presentment for redemption of coupons to such person or persons, and at such times and in such manner, as the Secretary deems necessary or appropriate to protect the interests of the United States or to ensure enforcement of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act.

(b) Whoever knowingly uses, transfers, acquires, alters, or possesses coupons or authorization cards in any manner not authorized by this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall, if such coupons or authorization cards are of the value of \$100 or more, be guilty of a felony and shall, upon conviction thereof, be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned for not more than five years, or both, or, if such coupons or authorization cards are of a value of less than \$100, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction thereof, be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

(c) Whoever presents, or causes to be presented, coupons for payment or redemption of the value of \$100 or more, knowing the same to have been received, transferred, or used in any manner in violation of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall be guilty of a felony and shall, upon conviction thereof, be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned for not more than five years, or both, or, if such coupons are of a value of less than \$100, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction thereof, be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

(d) Coupons issued pursuant to this Act shall be deemed to be obligations of the United States within the meaning of section 8 of title 18, United States Code.

(e) Any coupon issuer or any officer, employee, or agent thereof convicted of failing to provide the report required under section 7(d) of this Act or of violating the regulations issued under section 7(d) and (e) of this Act shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

(f) Any coupon issuer or any officer, employee, or agent thereof convicted of knowingly providing false information in the report required under section 7(d) of this Act shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both. (7 U.S.C. 2024)

### **ADMINISTRATIVE COST-SHARING AND QUALITY CONTROL**

**Sec. 16.** (a) The Secretary is authorized to pay to each State agency an amount equal to 50 per centum of all administrative costs involved in each State agency's operation of the food stamp program, which costs shall include, but not be limited to, the cost of (1) outreach, (2) the certification of applicant households, (3) the acceptance, storage, protection, control, and accounting of coupons after their delivery to receiving points within the State, (4) the issuance of coupons to all eligible households, and (5) fair hearings: Provided, That the Secretary is authorized to pay each State agency an amount not less than 75 per centum of the costs of State food stamp program investigations and prosecutions, and is further authorized at the Secretary's discretion to pay any State agency administering the food stamp program on all or part of an Indian reservation under section 11(d) of this Act such amounts for administrative costs as the Secretary determines to be necessary for effective operation of the food stamp program.

(b) The Secretary shall (1) establish standards for the efficient and effective administration of the food stamp program by the States, including, but not limited to, staffing standards such as caseload per certification worker limitations, and (2) instruct each State to submit, at regular intervals, reports which shall specify the specific administrative actions proposed to be taken and implemented in order to meet the efficiency and effectiveness standards established pursuant to clause (1) of this subsection. If the Secretary finds that a State has failed without good cause to meet any of the Secretary's standards, or has failed to carry out the approved State plan of operation under section 11(d) of this Act, the Secretary shall withhold from the State such funds authorized under subsections (a) and (c) of this section as the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

(c) Effective October 1, 1978, the Secretary is authorized to adjust a State agency's federally funded share of administrative costs pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, other than the costs already shared in excess of 50 per centum as described in the exception clause of subsection (a) of this section, by increasing such share to 60 per centum of all such administrative costs in the case of a State agency whose cumulative allotment error rates with respect to eligibility, overissuance, and underissuance as calculated in the quality control program undertaken pursuant to subsection (d)(1) of this section is less than five per centum.

(d) Effective October 1, 1978, and annually thereafter, each State not receiving an increased share of administrative costs pursuant to subsection (c) of this section shall be required to develop and submit to the Secretary for approval, as part of the plan of operation required to be submitted under section 11(d) of this Act, a quality control plan for the State which shall specify the actions such State proposes to take in order to reduce—

(1) the incidence of error rates in and the value of—

(A) food stamp allotments for households which fail to meet basic program eligibility requirements;

(B) food stamp allotments overissued to eligible households; and

(C) food stamp allotments underissued to eligible households; and

(2) the incidence of invalid decisions in certifying or denying eligibility.

(e) As used in this section ‘quality control’ means monitoring and reducing the rate of errors in determining basic eligibility and benefit levels. (7 U.S.C. 2025)

## **RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION, AND EVALUATIONS**

**Sec. 17.** (a) The Secretary may, by way of making contracts with or grants to public or private organizations or agencies, undertake research that will help improve the administration and effectiveness of the food stamp program in delivering nutrition-related benefits.

(b)(1) The Secretary is authorized to conduct on a trial basis, in one or more areas of the United States, pilot or experimental projects designed to test program changes that might increase the efficiency of the food stamp program and improve the delivery of food stamp benefits to eligible households, including projects involving the payment of the value of allotments in the form of cash to eligible households all of whose members are either age sixty-five or over or entitled to supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, the use of countersigned food coupons or similar identification mechanisms that do not invade a household’s privacy, and the use of food checks or other voucher-type forms in place of food coupons. The Secretary may waive the requirements of this Act to the degree necessary for such projects to be conducted, except that no project shall be implemented which would lower or further restrict the income or resource standards or benefit levels provided pursuant to sections 5 and 8 of this Act.

(2) The Secretary shall, jointly with the Secretary of Labor, implement two pilot projects involving the performance of work in return for food stamp benefits in each of the seven administrative regions of the Food and Nutrition Service of the Department of Agriculture, such projects to be (A) appropriately divided in each region between locations that are urban and rural in characteristics and among locations selected to provide a representative cross-section of political subdivisions in the States and (B) submitted for approval prior to project implementation, together with the names of the agencies or organizations that will be engaged in such projects, to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,

and Forestry of the Senate. Under such pilot projects, any person who is subject to the work registration requirements pursuant to section 6(d) of this Act, and is a member of a household that does not have earned income equal to or exceeding the allotment to which the household is otherwise entitled pursuant to section 8(a) of this Act, shall be ineligible to participate in the food stamp program as a member of any household during any month in which such person refuses, after not being offered employment in the private sector of the economy for more than thirty days after the initial registration for employment referred to in section 6(d)(1)(i) of this Act, to accept an offer of employment from a political subdivision or a prime sponsor pursuant to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 812), for which employment compensation shall be paid in the form of the allotment to which the household is otherwise entitled pursuant to section 8(a) of this Act, with each hour of employment entitling the household to a portion of the allotment equal in value to 100 per centum of the Federal minimum hourly rate under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)); which employment shall not, together with any other hours worked in any other capacity by such person exceed forty hours a week; and which employment shall not be used by the employer to fill a job opening created by the action of such employer in laying off or terminating the employment of any regular employee not supported under this paragraph in anticipation of filling the vacancy so created by hiring an employee or employees to be supported under this paragraph: Provided, That all of the political subdivision's or prime sponsor's public service jobs supported under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 812), are filled before such subdivision or sponsor can extend a job offer pursuant to this paragraph: Provided further, That the sponsor of each such project shall provide the assurances required of prime sponsors under section 205(c)(7), (8), (15), (19), and (24) of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 845(c)), and the Secretary shall require such sponsors to comply with the conditions contained in sections 208(a)(1), (4), and (5) and (c) and 703(4) of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 848(a) and (c) and 983). The Secretary and the Secretary of Labor shall jointly issue reports to the appropriate committees of Congress on the progress of such pilot projects no later than six and twelve months following enactment of the Act, and shall issue a final report describing the results of such pilot projects no later than eighteen months following enactment of this Act.

(c) The Secretary shall develop and implement measures for evaluating, on an annual or more frequent basis, the effectiveness of the food stamp program in achieving its stated objectives, including, but not limited to, the program's impact upon the nutritional and economic status of participating households, the program's impact upon all sectors of the agricultural economy, including farmers and ranchers, as well as retail food stores, and the program's relative fairness to households of different income levels, different age composition, different size, and different regions of residence.

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, conduct a study, through the use of Federal income tax data, of the feasibility, alternative methods of implementation, and the effects of a program

to recover food stamp benefits from members of eligible households in which the adjusted gross income of members of such households for a calendar year (as defined by the Internal Revenue Code of 1954) may exceed twice the income poverty guidelines set forth in section 5(c) of this Act. Such study shall be conducted in rural and urban areas only on a voluntary basis by food stamp recipients. The Secretary shall, no later than twelve months and eighteen months from the date of enactment of this Act, report the results of the study to the Committees on Agriculture and Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and to the Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and Finance of the Senate, together with such recommendations as the Secretary deems appropriate. (7 U.S.C. 2026)

### **AUTHORIZATON FOR APPROPRIATIONS**

**Sec. 18.** (a) To carry out the provisions of this Act, there are hereby authorized to be appropriate not in excess of \$5,847,600,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1978; not in excess of \$6,158,900,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1979; not in excess of \$6,188,600,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1980; and not in excess of \$6,235,900,000 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1981. Not to exceed one-fourth of 1 per centum of the previous year's appropriation is authorized in each such fiscal year to carry out the provisions of section 17 of this Act. Sums appropriated under the provisions of this Act shall, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, continue to remain available until expended.

(b) In any fiscal year, the Secretary shall limit the value of those allotments issued to an amount not in excess of the appropriation for such fiscal year. If in any fiscal year the Secretary finds that the requirements of participating States will exceed the limitation set herein, the Secretary shall direct State agencies to reduce the value of such allotments to be issued to households certified as eligible to participate in the food stamp program to the extent necessary to comply with the provisions of this subsection. (7 U.S.C. 2027)